



# Head Lice: What You Should Know

Information for  
Schools, Facilities and Families

# Head Lice Are Here To Stay



# Head Lice

- are tiny insects about the size of a sesame seed
- have six claws that are used to “cling” to a hair shaft
- are tan, brown or grey in colour
- can only live on a human head
- can move fast and are hard to see
- do not jump, fly or swim - just crawl



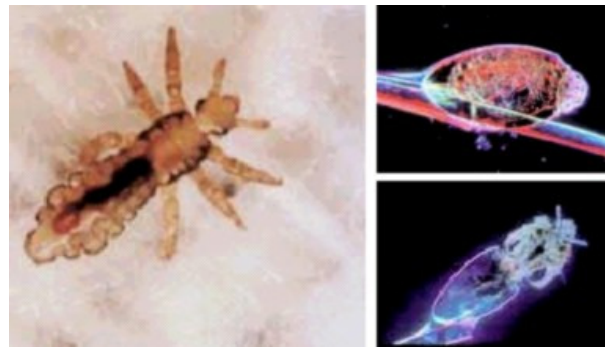
# Head Lice

- Are very common and occur in people of all ages, races and classes
- Are most common in school-aged children
- Are spread by close head-to-head contact
- May be spread by sharing items such as hats, helmets and hair brushes



# Head Lice

- Feed by ‘biting’ the scalp
- Bites can itch
- A person can have head lice and not know it
- Head lice eggs are called “nits”
- Nits stick to the shaft of the hair
- They are white or beige



Head Lice do not cause  
disease

# Managing Head Lice

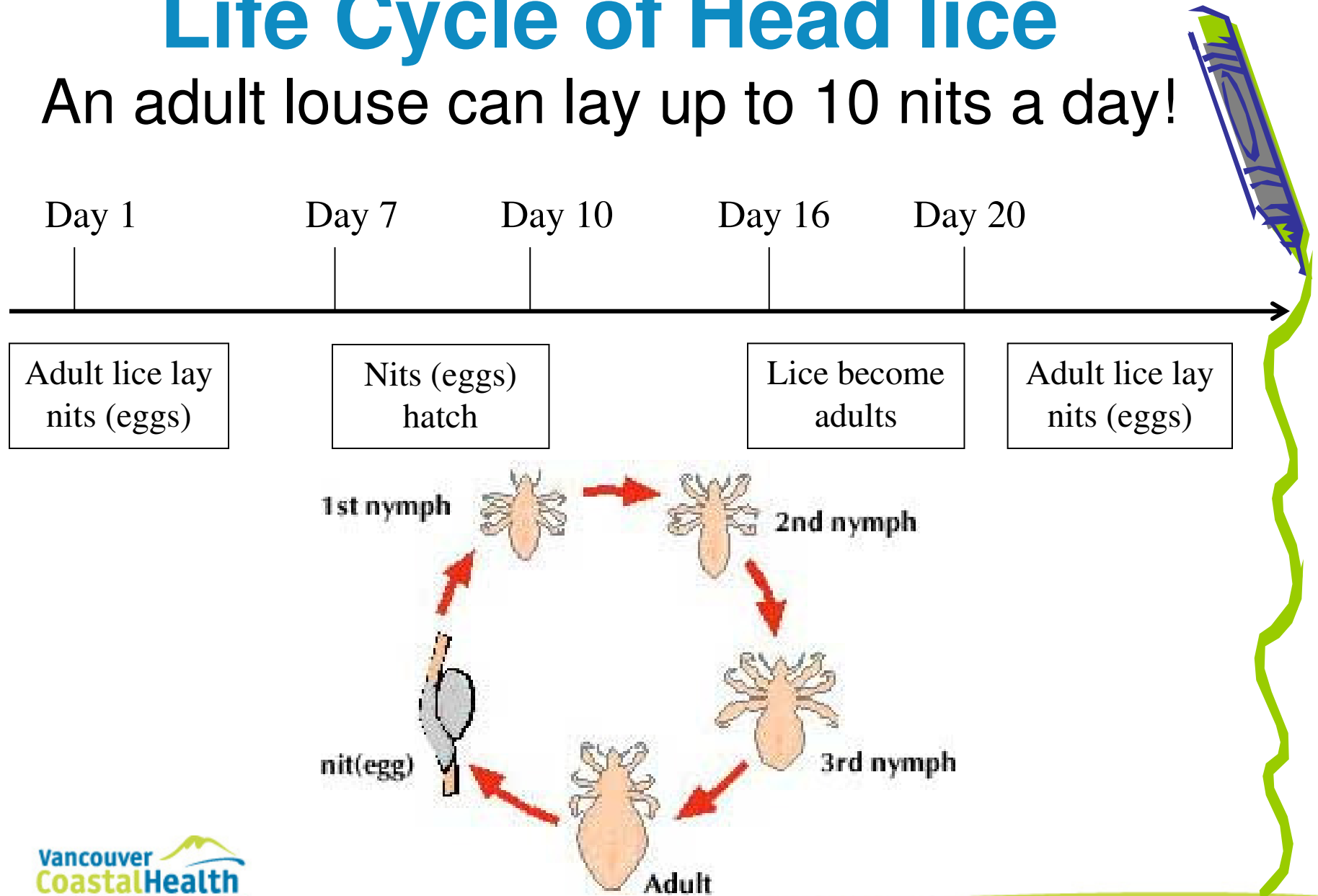
# Treat the Lice and Take care of the Child!

- Reassure
  - Comfort and support the child and family
- Normalize
  - Mind your language
  - Be aware of your personal reactions
  - Accept reality
- Inform
  - Dispel the myths
  - Reinforce the facts



# Life Cycle of Head lice

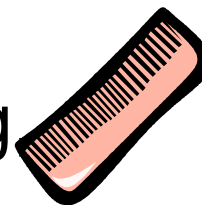
An adult louse can lay up to 10 nits a day!



# Managing Head Lice: 3 Approved Treatments

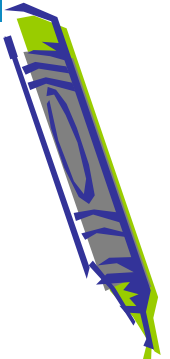
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- **Pediculicides** – chemical shampoo or cream rinse that kills lice and sometimes nits. Still need to wet comb to remove nits.
- **Wet Combing** – manual removal of live lice and nits by using a “nit-comb”.
- **Spray ( e.g. NYDA)**– works by suffocating killing lice and nits.



Alternative treatments have not been proven to be effective and can sometimes be toxic.

# Exclusion from Facilities or School for Head Lice is Not Necessary



- “No-Nit” and school exclusion policies have not been shown to be effective in managing head lice (Canadian Pediatric Society)
- There is no medical reason to exclude a child from school or daycare
- Head lice should not keep a child from learning and being successful in school
- Many children miss a lot of school or daycare due to head lice



# Routine Screening for Lice is Not Recommended

- Routine head checks have not been shown to prevent or reduce cases of head lice
- Routine head checks takes students away from regular learning activities
- Routine head checks take staff, parents and volunteers away from other activities
- Misidentification is common



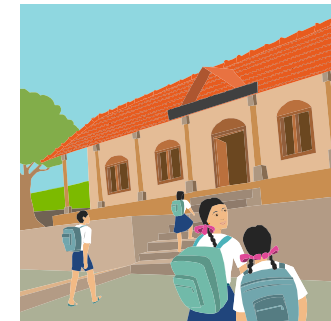
# Managing Head Lice at Home

- Know the facts about head lice
- Teach child(ren) not to share hats, scarves, helmets
- Choose treatment options that work for the family and follow through with them
- Check the heads of every member of the household when there has been head lice found in a close contact
- Treat only the household members who have head lice with a recommended treatment
- Help reduce the stigma of head lice
- Check child(ren)'s heads regularly

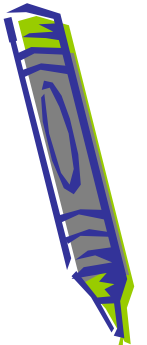


# Managing Head Lice at Schools or Facilities

- Know the facts about head lice
- Promote head lice awareness in regular newsletters or on bulletin boards
- Use the school head lice package in the C&Y Program School Health Manual (online [www.vch.ca/schoolhealth/ns](http://www.vch.ca/schoolhealth/ns) or from the public health nurse)
- Communicate with parents when there is a case of head lice using letters and handouts in the C&Y School Health Manual
- Help reduce the stigma of head lice



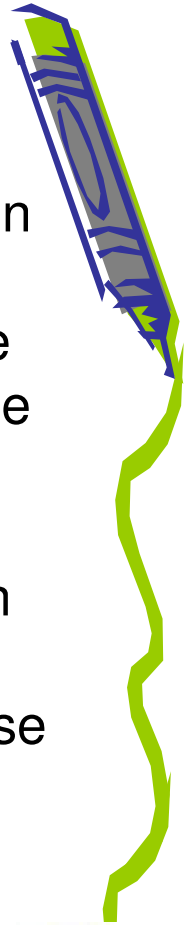
# Head Lice are here to stay but they can be managed



# How to Check for Head Lice

1. Find a comfortable well-lit area.
2. Use a fine toothed (lice) comb. Wet the hair and put conditioner in it (do not rinse).
3. Divide the hair into small sections and comb from the base of the scalp to the ends of the hair. First comb the hair at the back of the neck, behind the ears and above the forehead. Then, check the rest of the head.
4. Look for live lice on the comb. A light colored towel or tissue can be used to wipe the comb.
5. If you find a louse, check all household members. Treat only those who have head lice. If you find nits only, check for a few consecutive days and again a week later.

If you do not find lice, check again in a few days. To find head lice early, it is a good idea to check the child regularly for head lice.





# Help from the Public Health Nurse

The Public Health Nurse can:

- provide schools, daycares and other facilities with head lice resources
- act as a resource for information about the management of head lice. This may include speaking to parent groups or at staff meetings.
- support staff, parents and other caregivers to manage head lice.

**Note: Public health nurses do not do individual or mass head checks.**

